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FACT SHEET

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Mental Health Issues Implementation Task Force

The Judicial Council's Mental Health Issues Implementation Task Force was appointed to advise the council on ways to implement the recommendations of the Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues. These recommendations were designed to improve the response of the criminal justice system to offenders with mental illness by promoting collaboration at the state and local level. The task force focus will be on improving practices and procedures in criminal cases involving adult and juvenile offenders with mental illness, ensuring the fair and expeditious administration of justice, and promoting improved access to treatment for litigants with mental illness in the criminal justice system.

Charge

The task force was charged with developing recommendations for policymakers, including the Judicial Council and its advisory committees, to improve systemwide responses to mentally ill offenders and to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues.

Specifically, the task force is charged with:

1. Identifying recommendations under Judicial Council purview to implement;
2. Identifying potential branch implementation activities; and
3. Developing a plan with key milestones for implementing the recommendations.

History

The Mental Health Issues Implementation Task Force evolved from the Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues which was one of seven similar projects established by state supreme courts throughout the nation with support from the Council of State Governments (CSG) as part of its criminal justice

and mental health initiative encouraging effective leadership from different facets of the criminal justice and mental health systems. Continued funding for this project is supported by California's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) fund.

Presiding Judge Richard J. Loftus, Jr., of the Superior Court of Santa Clara County serves as chair of the task force. Task force membership currently includes judicial officers and court executive officers from throughout the state. The task force will establish liaison positions with mental health and justice system partners.

The task force, in collaboration with its mental health and justice system partners, will address ways to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism rates for offenders with mental illness while being mindful of cost and public safety considerations. The work of the task force will be based on the final recommendations submitted to the Judicial Council by the Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues.

The recommendations are designed to:

- Promote innovative and effective practices to foster the fair and efficient processing and resolution of cases involving mentally ill persons in the criminal justice system;
- Expand education programs for the judicial branch, State Bar of California, law enforcement, and mental health service providers to address the needs of offenders with mental illness;
- Foster excellence through implementation of evidence-based practices for serving persons with mental illness; and
- Encourage collaboration among criminal justice partners and other stakeholders to facilitate interagency and interbranch efforts that reduce recidivism and promote improved access to treatment for persons with mental illness.

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Additional resources:

Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project <http://consensusproject.org/>;
and

Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project Leadership Initiative:
<http://consensusproject.org/judges-leadership-initiative>

California Department of Mental Health/Mental Health Services Act
Information:

http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Prop_63/MHSA/State_Interagency_Partners.asp